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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001960

SIPDIS

FOR NEA A/S WILLIAM BURNS AND NEA DAS DAVID SATTERFIELD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2013

TAGS: [IT](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EAID](#) [IS](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI DISTRUST OF ITALIAN CONFERENCE ON
PALESTINIAN REFORM

REF: A. ROME 1647

[1](#)B. ROME 1910

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR MEL SEMBLER FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) ISRAELI EMBASSY DCM AMOS RADIAN EXPRESSED TO POL MC ON APRIL 30 HIS EMBASSY'S RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE MFA-SPONSORED CONFERENCE ON PALESTINIAN REFORM AND ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION TO BE HELD IN ROME MAY 28-29 (REF A). RADIAN ARGUED VARIOUSLY THAT:

-- ITALY IS TRYING TO INSERT THE EU INTO A MORE PROMINENT ROLE IN ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION AND NEGOTIATION THAN ISRAEL CAN ACCEPT.

-- THE EU AND OTHERS WILL SEIZE ON THE CONFERENCE TO ARGUE THAT ABU MAZEN'S ELECTION MEANS PALESTINIAN OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE ROADMAP ARE FULFILLED AND THAT ALL PRESSURE MUST NOW BE PLACED ON ISRAEL.

-- THE CONFERENCE WILL EVOLVE INTO A FORCED NEGOTIATION OVER THE ROADMAP.

POL MC REPLIED THAT HE FOUND NOTHING IN THE INFORMATION WE HAD ABOUT THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE ANY OF THOSE CONCERNS. SOMETIMES, A CONFERENCE IS JUST A CONFERENCE.

[1](#)2. (C) ON MAY 2, ISRAELI AMB. GOL REPEATED SOME OF THE SAME ARGUMENTS TO AMB. SEMBLER. HE SAID THAT THE EMBASSY IS RECOMMENDING TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT THAT THERE BE NO HIGH-LEVEL ATTENDANCE FROM ISRAEL. HE URGED AMB. SEMBLER TO DISCOURAGE A/S BURNS FROM ACCEPTING THE ITALIAN INVITATION. AMB. SEMBLER SAID HE WOULD REPORT AMB. GOL'S CONCERNS. HOWEVER, THE US EMBASSY DID NOT SHARE THE SAME SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE ITALIAN MOTIVES, AND CONTINUED TO BELIEVE IT VERY VALUABLE FOR A/S BURNS TO CONSULT HERE BEFORE ITALY ASSUMES THE EU PRESIDENCY IN JULY.

[1](#)3. (C) ON MAY 5, NEA WATCHER MET WITH LUCA FERRARI, THE MFA'S OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS, TO DISCUSS THE CONFERENCE. FERRARI SAID THAT RADIAN HAD JUST EXPRESSED HIS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE TO HIM BUT ASSURED HIM THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL WOULD NOT OPPOSE IT BY DENYING THE PALESTINIANS TRAVEL PERMITS. IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE A MORE MEASURED TONE THAN THE ONE USED WITH THE POL MC, RADIAN TOLD FERRARI HE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CONFERENCE FOR THE PURPOSES OF ITALIAN PUBLIC OPINION AND AS A PREPARATION FOR ITALY'S PRESIDENCY OF THE EU. THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, SAID RADIAN, WOULD PROBABLY SEND A SPEAKER, BUT NOT A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, FOR THE SECOND DAY'S DISCUSSION ON RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY (THE FIRST DAY WILL FOCUS ON POLITICAL REFORM OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY). FERRARI INSISTED TO RADIAN AND TO US THAT THIS IS INDEED A "CONFERENCE" ON PALESTINIAN REFORM AND NOT A POLITICAL MEETING OR A NEGOTIATION ON THE ROADMAP. HE REITERATED TO RADIAN AND TO US THAT, WITHIN THE QUARTET, ITALY INTENDS TO COOPERATE CLOSELY WITH THE US.

[1](#)4. (C) FERRARI SAID THAT ABU MAZEN WILL NOT ATTEND THE CONFERENCE. HOWEVER, HE EXPECTS OTHER KEY PALESTINIAN FIGURES: SALAM FAYAD, HANAN NASR, AL-MASRI (ALL CONFIRMED) AND ABD RABO (PROBABLE). BESIDES MORATINOS, HE HAS CONFIRMATION FROM A/S BURNS COUNTERPARTS FROM RUSSIA (DOVIN) AND GERMANY (TRAUTWEIN), AND IS HOPEFUL TO GET THE SAME FROM THE UK AND FRANCE. FERRARI WOULD HOPE TO HOLD QUINT CONSULTATIONS, IDEALLY INVOLVING A USG REP, ON THE MARGINS OF THE CONFERENCE. AT THIS POINT, TERJE LARSEN'S ATTENDANCE IS DOUBTFUL. IF HE DOES ATTEND, FERRARI SAID THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE HAPPY TO FACILITATE A MEETING PLACE FOR INFORMAL QUARTET DISCUSSION. ALTHOUGH ROME IS KEEPING THE GREEK GOVERNMENT, AS EU PRESIDENT, FULLY INFORMED, HE DOES NOT EXPECT GREEK FM PAPANDREOU TO ATTEND.

[1](#)5. (C) COMMENT: WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO JUDGE THE VALIDITY OF THE ISRAELI CONCERNS, BUT REPORT THEM IN CASE ISRAEL IS MAKING ITS CASE AGAINST ATTENDANCE DIRECTLY IN WASHINGTON. WE ARE IN A POSITION TO JUDGE THE ITALIAN APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS. WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE MORE BALANCED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS, AND MORE CAREFULLY COORDINATED WITH THE USG POSITION, THAN THAT OF ANY RECENT EU PRESIDENT. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT THE PARTICIPATION OF A/S BURNS OR OF DAS DAVID SATTERFIELD (WHO WE UNDERSTAND COULD BE IN EUROPE IN THIS TIME FRAME) IN THE CONFERENCE WOULD BE HIGHLY BENEFICIAL AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS PRIOR TO ITALY BECOMING THE

EU PRESIDENT JULY 1.
SEMBLER

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